

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 00904 240808Z
ACTION EB-08

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7435

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EWWT, EALR, ET
SUBJ: PORT CONDITIONS AT ASSAB

REF: STATE 045779

SUMMARY: SEVERE CONGESTION AT PORT OF ASSAB IS CAUSING
BERTHING DELAYS OF UP TO FORTY DAYS FOR VESSELS CARRYING
GENERAL CARGO. VESSELS LOADING ETHIOPIAN COFFEE, HOWEVER,
ARE ASSURED BY ASSAB PORT AUTHORITIES OF A BERTH WITHIN A
MAXIMUM OF 5 DAYS, ACCORDING TO SHIPPING AGENT GELLATLY-
HANKEY.

1. FIRST HAND OBSERVATION OF CONDITION AT ASSAB NOT POSSIBLE
BY EMBASSY PERSONNEL. ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL MANAGER OF
GELLATLY-HANKEY (REPRESENTATIVES IN ETHIOPIA FOR WATERMAN
LINES), CONGESTED PORT CONDITIONS ARE CAUSING DELAYS OF UP
TO FORTY DAYS ON THE DISCHARGE OF CONVENTIONAL COMMERCIAL
CARGO. WHEN ETHIOPIAN COMMODITIES (PRIMARILY COFFEE) ARE
EXPORTED, HOWEVER, A DRastically DIFFERENT PICTURE IS
PRESENTED. SHIPS LOADING COMMODITIES ARE GIVEN THE FIRST
BERTH AVAILABLE, AND ARE GUARANTEED A BERTH WITHIN A MAXIMUM
OF FIVE DAYS.

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PAGE 02 ADDIS 00904 240808Z

2. ACCORDING TO SAME SOURCE, THE TWO WATERMAN LINES VESSELS
ARE THE "THOMAS NELSON" AND THE "THOMAS LYNCH". THE "THOMAS
NELSON" IS DUE IN ASSAB O/A MARCH 7 AND IS TO LOAD 3000
TONS OF COFFEE (FOR ETHIOPIA, A LARGE SHIPMENT). IT WILL
ALSO OFF-LOAD 621 TONS GENERAL CARGO. IN THIS INSTANCE,
GELLATLY-HANKEY CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN GUARANTEED IMMEDIATE
BERTHING. THE "THOMAS LYNCH" IS DUE IN ASSAB O/A MARCH 6

TO DISCHARGE 700 TONS OF BAGGED WHEAT. THE BAGS ARE TO BE OFF-LOADED ONTO BARGES LEFT BY WATERMAN LINES IN ASSAB FOR SUCH PURPOSES AND NO DELAYS ARE ANTICIPATED.

3. GELLATLY-HANKEY IS A REPUTABLE FIRM AND THERE IS NO REASON TO DISBELIEVE THEIR ASSURANCES THAT THE TWO WATERMAN LINES SHIPS WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE A REASONABLY QUICK TURN AROUND AT ASSAB. AN UNRELATED SOURCE HAS CONFIRMED TO EMBOFF THAT ETHIOPIAN COFFEE EXPORTS DEFINITELY ARE GIVEN SPECIAL CONSIDERATION BY ASSAB PORT OFFICIALS.

4. OF NOTE IS AN ARTICLE IN THE LOCAL PRESS STATING THAT EFFECTIVE FEB 12, 1978, THE "RED SEA/US HOME BOUND CONFERENCE" INSTITUTED A "10 PER CENT PORT DETENTION SURCHARGE" FOR "VESSELS LOADING FROM ETHIOPIAN PORTS".

MATHERON

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